Depot Town Rag

June 1989

Frog Island Jazz

Summer Calendar

1840-1849 :The East Side

Oldest apt. dweller

Adams School 3rd grade

and other strictly local stuff!

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Upstairs, Downtown!

Apartment living in Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town

Each spring and fall season sees hordes of apartment seekers beseige Depot Town looking for places to live which might best be descibed as more charming than condos and cheaper than Ann Arbor. Although no central clearing house represents the districts' housing stock, nearly all of the apartment owners see each other in the neighborhood and at local meetings each month. Last month's DTA meeting saw their commiseration on the current status of apartment life in Depot Town and its relationship to the cosmos.

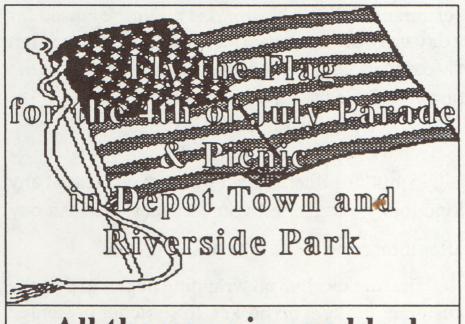
This informal survey may be of interest to anyone who really believes there is a housing crisis in America and that those old apartments up over the store just might provide viable living space for today's population. Depot Town can be, indeed, a microcosm of the nation's downtown districts, each intended as a natural mix of commercial and residential use. In reality, most of America's housing of this type has been sadly neglected, its stores boarded over and the spacious upstairs apartments empty and unheated, often inhabited only by pigeons. Meanwhile, the nation's underclass lives beneath highway bridges and in abandonded automobiles.

Perhaps the facts from Depot Town's tiny sampling could be applied in other communities originally designed for multi-use habitation.

Current conditions: The Cross and River Street blocks known as Ypsilanti's Depot Town district contain seventeen buildings in which the upper floors were originally used as apartments spaces. Today, the rooms of the old railroad hotel (Oliver House/Ken's/Alibi/ Aubree's) have been converted into a posh entertainment center. The railroad tavern (Central Bar/Sidetrack) uses its spacious upper rooms for office and storage. Standard Printing's apartments became the Eagles Club back in the 1930's, then evolved into Serenity House in recent years. City Body's three apartments will eventually be converted into offices.

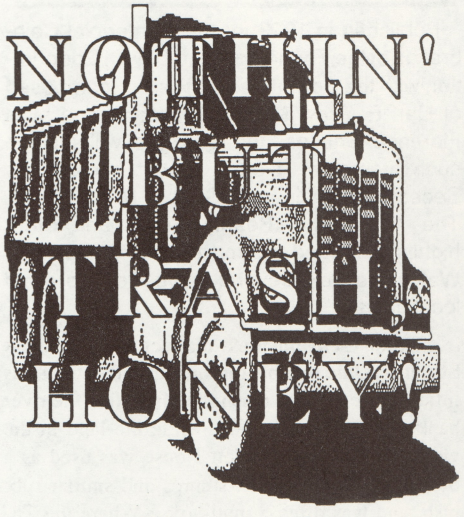
Vital Statistics.: Of the thirteen buildings remaining, forty-one apartments are found, ranging in size from a whopping 3000 square feet (complete with a fifty-foot ballroom!) to tiny efficiencies of approximately 800 square feet. Some buildings have only one apartment, while the largest complex has eight.

These forty-one apartments provide living space for sixty-eight people, today. All the existing units have been completely re-wired in the last few years and meet City and BOCA codes. Only four are vacant, awaiting rehabilitation. Four others are used as studios and have no full-time**(continued on page 3)**



All the news in one block in one month:

- Freight House dock finished and dedicated to the many volunteers who made it happen.
- New steps to Frog Island installed from the north-side parking lot.
- An original side window reappeared at Aubree's facing the railroad tracks.
- School Board candidates stumped the block for support of their causes for kids.
- Ann Arbor Convention & Visitors Bureau toured the district for the first time.
- Kelly Services began their monthly sponsorhip of *The Rag*.
- *Rag* producers sent out invoices for the first time in a decade, hoping to operate in the black soon.



The Check is in . . .

. . . the Dumpster

Solid waste management awareness has come to Depot Town and some of it came in the back of a commercical truck which unloaded its detritus in one of our highly visible dumpsters. A Detroit produce company, after making its Washtenaw deliveries, filled one of the receptacles between Aubree's and the railroad tracks last month. Imagine their surprise when they received a bill on a local attorney's letterhead for $500 for their handy, curb-side dumping convenience.

Now, if locals can determine who left the lovely, four-burner gas stove, they'll send another bill to the unsuspecting client.

Meanwhile, renters of local dumpsters are monitoring their units more carefully, seeing that the people who use them are the same people who pay the rents on the shops and apartments each month.

Folks seeking free sanitary land fill should keep looking. Depot Town plays dirty -- and sends a bill for such service.

Other than that, it is suggested that 'dumpers' find the Ypsilanti Recycling Project, just 1000 feet to the north. It's the only way to go.

1840-1849 The East Side: Mud holes, oak ties, teamsters, famous firsts, July Fourth, cigars, whiskey and ale, meat markets, soft soap, boots and early mills. Those were the 'good old days.'

Excerpts from

Harvey C. Colburn's The Story of Ypsilanti

Published in 1923 for the Centennial Celebration of the Founding of the City, in Cooperation with the Committee on History composed of Carl E. Pray, Mrs. P.R. Cleary, and Miss Florence Shultes, the excerpts will include such items of Depot Town interest as Secession, Business, Shops, Mills, Sheds, The Ypsi-Ann , Beauty Spots and other highlights in and around the railroad district. Watch the next several issues for more old local news.

The present business district of East Cross Street was laid out, but for some time the street was little used, except to reach the mill. Near the river bank stood a cooper shop, while the land in the vicinity of the later Follett House was used as a dumping ground for old stumps and similar rubbish, and was often a mud-hole. Where the Thompson Block now stands, on River Street, was a row of cheap, one-story frame buildings used as stores, and, north of these a blacksmith shop.

During the period of the Forties, the vicinity of the railway station became an important market for the timber of the surrounding country. The mill company, during the winter period of good sledding, bought saw-logs in quantities sufficient to fill the bank of the river for some distance, thus keeping the mill running to full capacity the year around. The railroad also purchased thousands of ties, Ypsilanti being counted the best station for oak ties on the line. A great quantity of fire-wood was bought for the locomotives and the ground now used for flower beds was stacked high with hundreds of cords.

The flour mill on Cross Street had a side-track laid, and was usually run to its full capacity on merchant milling, shipping most of its flour east and keeping a good coopershop busy supplying barrels. The mill offered a good market for local wheat and at times Cross Street was filled with wagons, many of them drawn by oxen, waiting their turns to unload. The money received by the teamsters was usually spent in the East Side business houses, which were well supplied, and visitors from east of the town had to cross the river only for their mail. Michigan Avenue, in contrast to the East Side, was long a comparatively quiet district.

The East Side took precedence over the West Side in many enterprises. It had the first fire department; the first street with paved gutter, which was Cross Street; the first clothing store, started by Henry Hill in one of the frame buildings on the site of the Thompson Block; the first daguerreotype gallery, opened by James F. Raymond; the first marble works, operated by Hiram Batchelder; the first lodge of United Workmen;, and the first and only lodge of Knights of Honor. Small boys of the period long recalled that on July Fourth, which was the high festival of the year, the finest fire-works were displayed near the station.

The East Side resented the location of the postoffice on the West Side, but, being unable to effect its removal, contented itself with a private postoffice of its own. This was located in a news office and had boxes in regular postoffice style. A carrier brought in each mail from the West Side, being provided with written orders from the box-holders.

A description of the East Side business section would be incomplete without mention of the places where the males of the community gathered for relaxation and social converse. There was a billiard room, a bowling-alley and saloons of varying but always adequate number. Three cents was the price of a good cigar, a drink of whiskey, or a glass of cream ale, lager beer being unknown.

The merchandising of the period carried on in the village's rudely kept stores was significant in many ways of the common habits of life and the prevailing economic limitations. The meat-markets would scarcely fill present day requirements. As butchers seldom, if ever, had any ice, they killed, during hot weather, only such animals as could be quickly disposed of to their limited circle of customers. The customers satisfied, the market might be closed for a day or two. A stranger, it is said, seeing the sign "Meat Market," stopped into the shop and asked the proprietor, Coats, for a lamb roast.

"No lamb on hand," said Coates.

"What have you for mutton?"

"No mutton either. In fact we have no meat of any kind today, but I'll tell you, stranger; come in day after tomorrow and I'll have some veal."

The markets had no wrapping paper, and, if the customer brought no basket, the butcher presented the meat on a wooden skewer the size of a pencil, and on this it was carried home. Most families kept on hand a supply of salted, dried and smoked meats, so the shortcomings of butchers worked no great hardship.

Canned fruit was quite unknown but the drying process was commonly used. Peaches of the finest quality were in abundance and very cheap, sometimes as low as twenty-five cents per bushel. Forlights, tallow candles or lamps burning whale or lard oil were the best to be had.

Soft soap was the common cleanser, and for its manufacture housewives had the habit of saving scraps of fat. A barrel of ashes set in the back yard furnished the necessary lye. Soap-boiling was an important periodic observance and provided an abundant supply of the civilizing agent, both easily and cheaply. The only laundry soap kept by the stores was yellow soap in three-pound bars.

The universal foot-wear for men was boots, trousers tucked in the tops for ordinary and left outside for dress-up. Even the small boys wore the same style of foot-gear and found great delight in "red-tops." A man, to be well-dressed needed a pair of light calf skin boots, made to measure and snugly fitting. Shoes were appropriate only for women and children. The ladies usually wore on the streets pegged calf skin shoes called "bats." As side-walks were infrequent these shoes required substance. Rubber overshoes without heels and clumsily fashioned were beginning to appear in the shops.

Although the East Side was, in certain lines, the center of village activity, the West Side maintained with it an aggressive competition. Michigan Avenue, from the Hawkins House to the river, was well lined with frame store buildings of cheap construction, which provided well for the village and country trade.

. . . The industries of the city prospered and some new enterprises were added.

The machine works on River Street, still in existence, was founded by H. Shaffer in 1840. The Ypsilanti Flouring Mill was completed by Mark Norris in the same year.

Arden H. Ballard purchased of Anthony Case and Chester Perry the dam and saw-mill erected in 1827 by Hardy and Reading and, on the site, in 1839-40, erected The Eagle Flouring Mills. The enterprise later passed successively into the hands of Doctor Clark of Detroit and Thomas O. Hill. The mills were destroyed by fire in 1856.

(Continued on Page Three)

City Radiator
100 North River
483-2248

City Body
20 East Cross Street
Front end alignment
and
Collision repair

TED'S
Auto Electric
307 North River • 483-1238

Mrs/Ammann is district's oldest apartment dweller

Mrs. Freida Ammann, 84 and legally blind since 1949, has lived in her tiny apartment at #46 East Cross since 1974. She may not be known by many on the block, since she hasn't left her apartment in four years, but the people in her building know her well. She says she's never lonely since she is house mother to the other second floor residents in the old Masonic Block/ Macpherson House and is always on hand to recieve those UPS deliveries for the buildings's other residents.

Before coming to Depot Town, Freida was bartender at the Royal Bar, now the Elks Club, on Michigan Avenue. She is visited daily by many friends and the Meals on Wheels program. Her corner window over Ninde Street, is her ear on the neighborhood and she looks forward to another eighty four years in Depot Town.

(Upstairs, Downtown, from page one:) occupants.

The highest rent is $500 a month while the lowest rent is $232, the only public assistance case to be found. Heat is provided by gas forced air, electric baseboard, hot water baseboard and wood-burning stoves. None of the original steam boilers is intact today.

The longest continuous apartment resident is Mrs. Freida Amman, who has resided in the same unit for twenty years. (See sidebar, this page.)

Females slightly outnumber the males, thirty -seven to thirty and thirteen school-age children live here. There are eight cats, four dogs and one hamster among the occupants, if the tenants can be believed.

Only one local family follows the tradition of living up over the shop, since they moved from suburbia to live above their restaurant in 1986. They pushed out the walls and connected the second floors of two different buildings to create space for their large family. Nine family members who live there also work in the landmark eating place, The Old Town Restaurant.

Five of the Depot Town buildings are owner-occupied, a dynamic which many attribute to the economic and social stability of the district in the last decade.

Only one building could be placed in the absentee landlord category, of which the owner lives out of town, seldom visits the building and has not even met the tenants in person. Even that one example is compensated for by the neighborly good spiriit of the inhabitants. Both the commercial and residential tenants are active in Depot Town activities. All of the other units are attended regularly by their owners.

What do the residents do? The current tenants include 6 teachers, 6 students, 3 architects, 3 musicians, 2 pizza managers, 2 social workers, 2 waitresses, 2 restauranteurs, 2 noodle manufacturers, and one each of the following: clerk, accountant, proof reader, florist, computer analyst, writer, construction worker, retired bartender, neurosurgeon, spring mfgr., Washtenaw Sheriff's Deputy, sculptor, scientist, and an electronic engineer as well as sales persons for cookies, futons, cable TV and radiators.

New Roosters take over

After extensive improvements to the former Weber Drug space, Belleville entrepreneur, Al Dancho, has sold his Depot Town branch of the Red Rooster Pizza & Ice Cream chain to Rick and Brenda Abdulla, of Dearborn, who took over the business in late April. Rick and Brenda have a year-and-a-half-old baby and hope to move to the district soon.

On Rick's first day in business, he stopped in to the Chamber of Commerce office to find out what he could do to help with the Heritage Festival and other local promotions. That's a great start. There's certainly plenty of work available and Ypsilanti welcomes their great enthusiasm. Welcome them.

YPSI DIXIT

"I called the number in the newspaper ad because they had advertised an apartment 'near Depot Town.' It was in Belleville!"

Seems everyone wants to live down in Depot Town, today! Ask for the address before you sign a lease!

(HISTORY OF YPSILANTI, Continued from Page Two)

In 1842, the saw-mill on the site of the later Cornwell's paper-mill was inherited from his father by John Y. Larzelere, and converted by him into a woolen factory. This factory prospered greatly for a time, employing from fifteen to twenty men and shipping its goods throughout the State. Larzelere died in 1847, the business ceased, the mill fell into decay and flood washed it away. . .

Next Month :

1850-1859 : The Secession of the East Side

Hey! all sidewalk supervisors!

Nail this down!

Guess how many nails it will take to build our new Freight House dock!!!

WIN valuable gift certificates from a veriety of merchants.

Come trackside at the Freight house in Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town and look, measure, guess, speculate, ponder, discuss it, eyeball it and fill in the blanks.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ How many nails? [ ]

Deposit in Freight House Coffee Shop any Market Day.

Winner(s) will be announced at dock comple-

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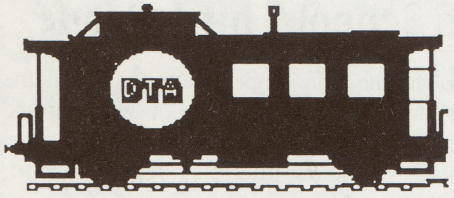


D.T.A. 20 April 1989

Guests: Linda Humel, Councilmember, Ward 5.

Minutes: 16 March '89 were reviewed and approved.

Treasurer's Report: 171.21 Merchants
252.00 Engine Club
234.68 Artists
501.61 General Fund

- DTA president, Jake Guter, will contact Mark Cotter @ Finn's J.M.&J. Insurance to confirm DTA's outstanding balance to be paid and to receive quotes for the cost of premise liability insurance.

Standing Committees:

Budgets & Events: DTA will register all DTA sponsord events with the Michigan Dept of Commerce.

- Frog Island Jazz is fallingin to place with new sponsorship with The Ark, running smoothly toward a 2-day success.

- The location of the Jazz Competition Tent @ Heritage Festival is expected to be finalized @ The April 29 Festival planning committee meeting.

- DTA is submitting a formal request to Festival to operate & manage the Jazz Competition bar in return for 5% of the bar's gross profits. DTA's debt to the Festival will be paid from these profits.

Merchants: How many nails are in the new Freighthouse dock adds to the new mystery of Depot Town. If you can solve this (or come really close) look forward to a prize from one of the generous Depot Town merchants. Fliers are at all retails.

NIFTY: Distribution of a really nifty flier will begin. The flyer elaborates on the relationship between Ypsilanti's assets (history, environment, geography, people, etc.)

Membership & Volunteers: DTA welcomes 15 new members and wishes to remind you all that meetings are open to all and that we specialize in making people feel welcome -- because you are.

Rag Report: Editor, Tom Dodd, is interested in locating and listening to folks who saw the Great Train Wreck of 1939 or who lived in the area at that time.

2nd Vice Presidents

Foundation : the City will present a plan reorganizing vehicular circulation in the Freight House-Market Plaza area. The plan will be presented to the Foundation at their May meeting. DTA will request to review and comment on the plan.

Merchants - no report.

Antique Engine Club: check their newsletter, the *Exhaust,* for a myriad of upcoming events.

Engineering Society : Two new members joined the force, looking for ways to clean up and fix up the area. They're available for private and public jobs. Give 'em some work via The Old Caboose mail slot.

Best Yet Award: John and Sonja Waite, for the care and attention they give to the DTA and its members.

Golden Goose Award: To the dumpster and trash can pirates. Depot Town is happy to open its front and back yards to you, but not our private trash receptacles. The rule of thumb: if it's too big for the pole-mounted street containers and if it's not recyclable, TAKE IT HOME WITH YOU.

New or renewing DTA members this month:

Linda Klenczar, ASID

Renee Rienas **Michael Ready**

Will & Bea Otis **Scott Knudstrup**

Get on board . . . by sending your $10 membership to The Depot Town Association, c/o The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti MI 48198. Associate membership includes permission to work on committees for absolutely nothing but gentle praise and a smile -- and free home delivery of *The Rag!*

Whistlestop Concert

7:30 pm, Friday, June 30
Freighthouse Coffee Shop

with
COUNTRY KEN
& COUSIN LINDA

$3 general admission, $2 for seniors

DEALERS WANTED

Old St. Luke's Ypsilanti
Heritage Antiques Show & Sale
Saturday, August 19, 9-6
Sunday, August 20, 12-5
Located in the heart of the
Ypsilanti Historic District
at the11th Annual
Ypsilanti Heritage Festival,
with some 200,000 visitors attending
Dealer Reservation Forms from:
St. Luke's Episcopal Church
120 N. Huron 313-483-4253

June 1989

Depot Towners are invited to participate in any or all of the following activities for the good of this old commercial district:

Foundation
8 p.m. Thursday, 6/1
in The Old Caboose

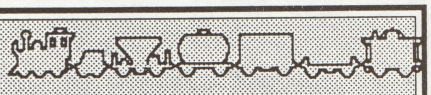
Development Authority
7:30 p.m. Thursday, 6/8
Freight House Coffee Shop

Merchants
5:15 p.m. Thursday, 6/15
Old Town Restaurant

Association
7:30 p.m. Thursday, 6/15
in The Old Caboose

Antique Engine Club
7:00 p.m. Thursday 6/22
Freight House Coffee Shop

Frog Island Jazz Festival
5-midnight, Fri, 6/23
Noon-midnight, Sat., 6/24
Frog Island Park



THE DEPOT TOWN RAG

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.

-Tom Dodd, editor

Depot Town Association, Inc.
Jacob Guter, president
c/o The Old Caboose
400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

Partronize our sponsors who bring you the monthly Depot Town Rag

HANSEN'S

STANDARD PRINTING

35 E. Cross Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48198

483-0339

The 1989 Frog Island

Zydeco Blues & Jazz Festival

Friday and Saturday
June 23 & 24

Advance sales:	Gate sales:
Friday $9.50	Friday $12.50
Saturday $11.50	Saturday $14.00
Combined $16.50	Combined $23.50

. . . and you can help! Local committees have been formed to serve beer, take tickets, help with set-up, security and break-down. Rather than buy a ticket, why not volunteer to help with this neighborhood event which will draw thousands to the district -- and receive complimentary gate and drink/food tickets?

Set-up - erect hundreds of feet of snow-fencing, circus tent, porta-johns ; **Bartending** - pour beer and wine in three-hour shifts; **Ticket-taking** - take tickets, stamp hands, check baskets for alcohol; **Security** - patrol gates, parking lot, help people feel secure and happy; **Hospitality**-welcome performers, serve buffet, drinks back stage; **Clean-up** - cruise the grounds with a plastic trash bag at regular intervals; **Break-down** - take it all down and return it. Call The Ark at 426-8469 to let the committee chairs know of your availability.

The Freighthouse Cafe
Wed & Sat 7-3
Refreshments, Music, Atmosphere

at the Ypsilanti Farmers' Market
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Whole Natural Food in Bulk or Small Quantities
M,T,Th,F 10-7; Wed. 10-9
Sat. 9-7; Sun. 12-5
312 North River Street
483-1520

Guest editors: The Adams School Third Grade

Depot Town is a good place to be.

The caboose is fun to visit. Mr. Dodd's apartment was fun to visit. There was a lot of old fashioned stuff. We like Hudsons because it has old, neat cars and some cool ones. Once a train track got torn down because the pegs came out. I like to fish at Frog Island.

- Danny Walker, John Miller, Frank Craig and Joshua Youngblood

The Old Caboose

A caboose is a good place to visit. It is red on the outside. Inside it has red carpet and white walls.

The caboose is the tail of the train. It has black bars on it and a light. Inside is a metal stove.

I like the way it looks inside. It has a nice smell. I like the pictures and the hole in the ceiling. Smoke comes out of the hole.

The caboose has four bunk beds, a desk and two doors. We liked going through the caboose. It was our favorite part of the field trip.

Thank you, Mr. Dodd, for showing us around.

- Jeremy Brown, Narre Walker, Devin Francois, Telicia Gardner, Shermaine Napier

The History of The Depot and the Greenhouse

This is the history of the Depot and the greenhouse. First we are going to tell you about the greenhouse. Years ago it was a beautiful greenhouse until a train jumped the tracks and hit the greenhouse. Once the people made a train out of flowers. The people took pride in the flower gardens.

Next we are going to tell you about the Depot. The Depot was the building where the people got their tickets and boarded the trains. There is still one beam missing on the Depot where the train jumped the tracks and hit the building. Soon there will be a café in the building.

- Nicholas Luchetti, Jimmy Gilbert, Donnie Scott

The Freight House

The inside of the Freight House looked like a flower house. outside the freight house was a beam. It cost about one hundred dollars. Inside were a lot of bags of popcorn and many boxes. there was fresh fruit and cheese to buy. There was a little train to look at. The whole freight house smelled like coffee and donuts. There is a little restaurant inside. Sometimes they have parties there on Saturday night. They are rebuilding a deck in back. In the summer they have flowers back there.

We enjoyed our trip to Depot Town and the ice cream was good!

- Julien Clark, Joshua Miller, Joey Origel and Jeanne Rupert

The Hansen's Printing Company

The Standard Printing Company has lots of nice people who work there. There were lots of old machines and new machines. There were lots of loud noises and as you walk through the shop the machines remind you of a time line. At first there was a linotype machine and then it went all the way to a computer as you go out of the shop. The computers make clicking sounds and the back smells like ink.

It is noisy inside.

There is a Cocker Spaniel named Trooper, that stays with the people who own the shop.

- Sarah Knuckles, Kara Durham, Stephanie Allen

We went to Depot Town

We went to Depot Town and saw many things. We saw a railroad track and we went to Miller's ice cream shop. There were books and a lot of other things too. We saw houses and we saw light towers. Mr. Dodd showed us how to look through our fingers to see paintings, just like an artist does.

- Latoya Clark and Tanesha Edwards

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VOTE
in the **June 12**
School Election

RAGTIME

June 23, 24, Friday & Saturday
Frog Island Jazz

July 4th, Tuesday
Independence Day Parade
comes to Depot Town for the first time.
Family picnics in the Parks

August 18, 19, 20
Friday, Saturday & Sunday
Ypsilanti Heritage Festival
brings more than 300,000 people
to the district for a fun-filled weekend.

Good Food

Authentic Mexican
Fresh **Food** Ethnic
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485-MEAN 17 E. Cross St.
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Good Food, Good Drinks, Good Times
56 East Cross Street
483-1053

Aubree's Saloon & Second Floor
39 East Cross Street

Red Rooster Pizza
. . . & Dairy Bar
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Resale Clothing & Other Niceties
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483-3637

Miller's Ice Cream
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Historic Depot Town

Olde Towne Coin & Gold
24 East Cross
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•

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482-2124